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Students plan Washington protest trip

By Charles Victor
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Several SIU-C students are again planning to show their displeasure over American involvement in an international hot spot.

The issue: U.S. involvement in Central America. The organization: the Coalition for Change, formed two years ago on campus to deal with social justice issues. The plan: a demonstration in Washington, D.C., on Saturday.

U.S. involvement in El Salvador sparked the formation of the Coalition for Change in spring 1982. The group has held talks, teach-ins and demonstrations, including a protest march through downtown Carbondale and a memorial service in honor of Archbishop Romero, who was murdered by Salvadoran government troops while saying Mass.

"But the situation is deteriorating," said John Patrick, leader of the coalition. "Barely 15 years ago Americans my age were dying in a useless war in Vietnam because in the beginning no one said anything about it. Central America is not Vietnam, but we may be making the same mistakes there."

This weekend, the coalition will take a group of protesters to Washington as part of the Mid-West Latin America Solidarity group, which will tie in with other groups for a large demonstration on Independence Day weekend. The demonstration itself will begin at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington on Saturday.

Referring to U.S. presence in Honduras, where the military and the CIA are training guerrillas to overthrow the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, Patrick said, "The Reagan administration is breaking both international laws of respecting the

sovereignty of nations and congressional rules forbidding the use of the CIA to overthrow foreign governments."

"I have met people from Nicaragua and some of our own faculty who have worked in El Salvador," he said. "They all say American action there is reaping a harvest of hate for the United States. They are not all communists, but many are forced to turn to the communists as their only source of support because our government refuses to support them in their legitimate fight against oppressive dictatorships. Instead, our government actively

supports these dictatorships that destroy democracy."

Patrick noted that more than 60 U.S. military advisers are in El Salvador and many more in Honduras, and that the Reagan administration has not ruled out the use of U.S. combat troops in the region. "It frightens me when I hear people like Senator Barry Goldwater call for the use of our combat troops and a

military solution to the problem," he said.

According to Patrick, the average SIU-C student is still indifferent to the problem.

"They all say they do not have time or money to get involved," he said. "I guess they will have to wait till we or members of our family start getting killed before they act. I don't want to wait that long."

Heidi Fillmore, a founding member of the coalition, said that 17 people have signed up for the trip. "We still have a few places open," she said. The trip will cost \$55 plus food per person, and lodging is free, she said.

Patrick said the group will leave Carbondale Thursday evening and return Sunday afternoon.